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Top five creative ideas using web 2.0

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Abstract

Web 2.0 offers many useful, interactive and collaborative tools for lecturers in order to enhance their teaching and learning. Based on author's experimentation with various Web 2.0 tools available, the following five ideas are recommend: (1) how to collect students' assignments online, (2) how to conduct realtime consultation with students, (3) how to 'auto publish' students' reflective learning journal in blog, (4) how to collect students feedback using Google Docs, and (5) how to share your lecture slide with students. These five creative ideas are hoped to facilitate learning in an interactive and stimulating environment.

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Keywords: E-learning; educational blogs; google docs; online teaching and learning; web 2.0

1. Introduction

According to Thompson (2008), Web 2.0 refers to “the next generation of Internet applications that allow (even encourage) the average Internet user to collaborate and share information online” (p 19). The emergence of Web 2.0 is not just the innovation of new tools and ideas but also a paradigm shift where we do things differently. The new paradigm saw the following shift (1) the control of material in the hands of end users rather than the developer (Craig, 2007), (2) the creation of online learning communities that organise and facilitate learning for their members. and (3) the increase in availability of tools and services that are accessed directly through a Web browser rather than residing on the user desktop (Goldwin-Jones, 2008).

Web 2.0 indicates major shift in thinking where it allows anyone to contribute content, places increasing significance of individual user, relies on participation (wisdom of the crowd, architecture of participation), and the shifting to collaborative effort (Thompson, 2008). Craig (2007) even suggests that learning management system (LMS) is now out of date as the control of materials now lies in the hands of the end users. The purpose of this study is to identify five creative ideas using Web 2.0 that can be used in teaching and learning.

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2. Related Literature

Several studies have been conducted to examine adoption of Web 2.0 tools in education. Ajjan and Hartshone (2008), Harshone and Ajjan (2009), and Chan (2010) examined adoption of Web 2.0 applications in higher learning institutions. Ajjan and Hartshone (2008), for example, found that the use of different Web 2.0 technologies to supplement in-class learning could provide their students with numerous pedagogical benefits. In another study to examine student awareness of the pedagogical benefits of Web 2.0, many students feel that some Web 2.0 applications can be effective at increasing satisfaction with a course, improving their learning and their writing ability, and increasing student interaction with other students and faculty (Hartshone and Ajjan, 2009).

Several authors discuss about the emergence of a new pedagogy with the adoption of Web 2.0 applications (for example, Alexander, 2008; Kamel Boulos and Wheelert, 2007, Gerben, 2009, and Grosseck, 2009). The new role of students is as content producer rather than content consumer with the emergence of Web 2.0 (Alexander, 2008; Kamel Boulos and Wheelert, 2007, Gerben, 2009, Grosseck, 2009). Rogers et al (2007) discuss Web 2.0 as a learning platform that harnesses student collective intelligence.

3. Methods

Various Web 2.0 applications were reviewed in the paper to see how useful they are in facilitating teaching and learning. From my experimentation with various applications, five new ideas were explored, namely in terms of collecting students' assignment online, conducting realtime consultation with students, 'autopublishing' students' reflective learning journal in a blog, collecting students' feedback, and sharing lecture slides with students. The tools experimented were Gmail, Dropbox, Jotform, Blogspot, Pingbox, Slideshare, SurveyMonkey, and Google Docs tool such as Google Presentations, Google Forms and Google Spreadsheet.

4. Findings

Based on author's experimentation with many Web 2.0 tools available, the following five ideas are useful for lecturers who wish to learn and explore the new e-learning experience (1) how to collect students' assignments online, (2) how to conduct realtime consultation with students, (3) how to 'auto publish' students' reflective learning journal in blog, (4) how to collect students feedback using Google Docs, and (5) how to share your lecture slides with students. The top five creative ideas using Web 2.0 tools for academicians can be summarized as in the following table.

Table 1. the top five ideas and the recommended solutions

Ideas	Top five Ideas	Recommended Solutions
1	Collecting students' assignments online	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create special e-mail 2. Use upload file function from Dropbox, then collect through jotform.com
2	Conducting real-time consultation with students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use Pingbox 2. Use Chat function (Chat n go, YM, Google Talk) 3. Use social media such as Facebook and MySpace
3	'Auto publishing' students' reflective learning journal in blog	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Blog co-authoring 2. Using e-mail posting address
4	Collecting students feedback using Google Docs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using Google Form to collect responses 2. Using Google Spreadsheet to analyse data

- 5 Sharing your lecture slides with students.
 1. Google presentation
 2. Slideshare

These five creative ideas can facilitate learning in an interactive and stimulating environment. The following discussion serves as a useful guide of how to apply the ideas in teaching and learning.

4.1.1 How to Collect Students' Assignments Online

In the old days, assignments were collected by hands where students put their paper into pigeon hole then saved in floppy disk and then through email. The two new alternative ways are (1) using special email for receiving assignment files, and (2) file upload function form. The recommended service is that of jotform.com

To create new e-mail, one can use free e-mail service either from Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail or other free email providers. In order to make it easy to refer, ask students to put matric number (student ID) and name as subject of e-mail, so lecturer can see from list of email sent.

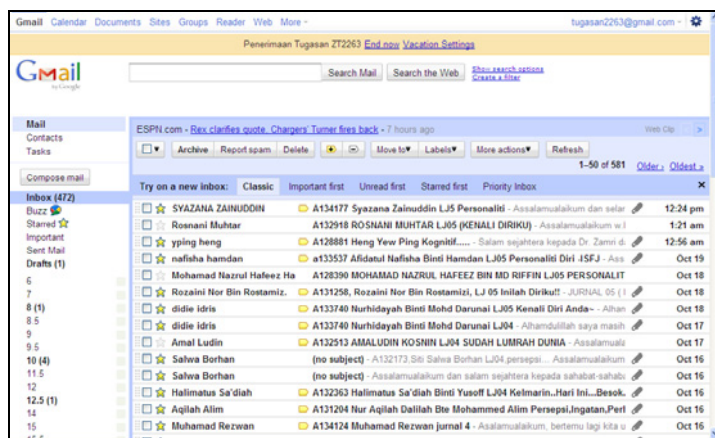


Figure 1. The Gmail View

It is also a good idea to set the auto-reply in vacation setting to, “your assignment has been received and will be marked as soon as possible”.

Another option is to use file upload function. There are many services available, one of the recommended ones is to create Dropbox with Jotform. To do this, you need to create a Dropbox account at <http://www.dropbox.com>. The Dropbox account is useful for storing your files in the Web. What you want to do now is to enable your student to attach their files to your Dropbox account. To do this, you need to use Jotform at <http://www.jotform.com/dropbox/>

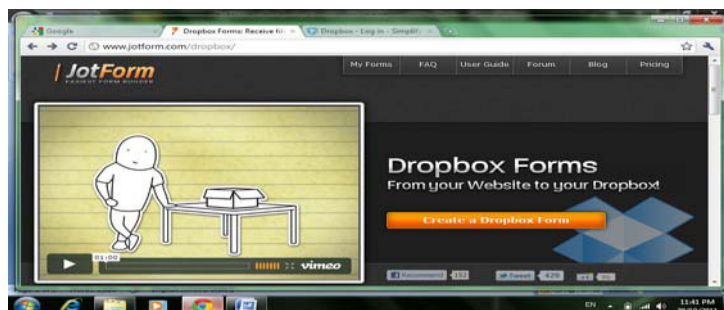


Figure 2. Creating a Dropbox form using Jotform

After completing the process, your Dropbox form may look like this:

Figure 3. The Dropbox form

When a student uploads his or her assignment file, the file is kept in your Dropbox account as in the following figure:

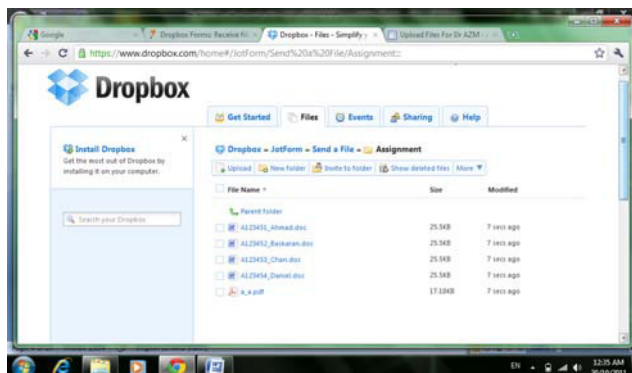


Figure 4. The uploaded files in Dropbox account

4.1.2 How to Conduct Realtime Consultation with Students

There are three recommended ways to conduct realtime consultation: Pingbox, chat function (such as Chat n Go, Yahoo Messenger and Google Talk), and social networking media (such as Facebook and MySpace).

Pingbox is one of the attractive attractions as it shows the educator is online. students visit blogs and websites that embed Pingbox. Another thing is students do not need to request to be listed as friends, just send the message whenever Pingbox badge shows the lecturer is online.

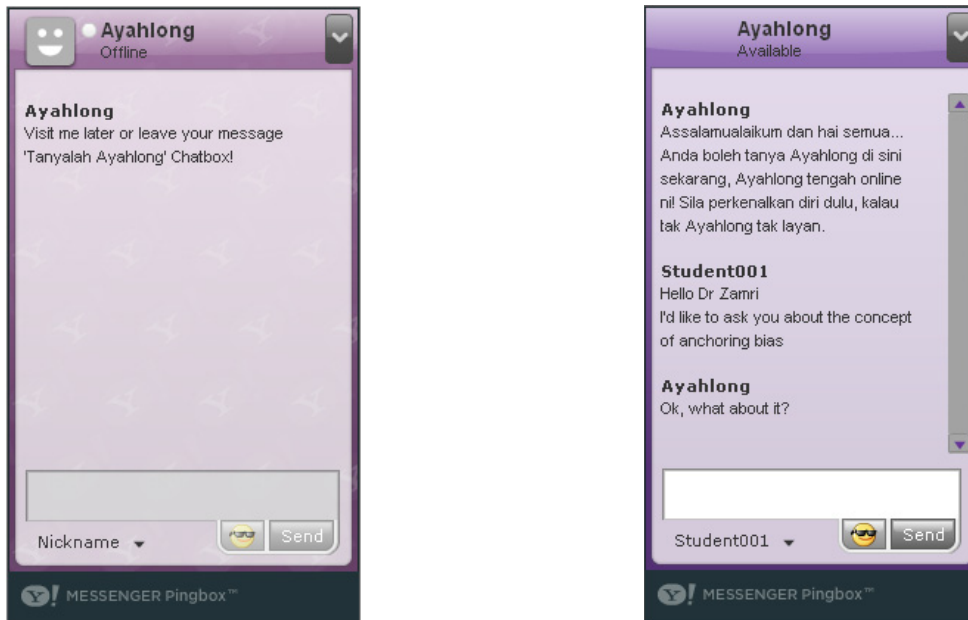


Figure 5. Pingbox in offline (left) and online (right) modes

Other options would be using Yahoo! Messenger, Google Talk or Window Live. There are two versions available, either installed the software in your desktop or you can use the Web version. You also can embed Chat room in blog and website that enable realtime communication with students. The best thing is you can save or archive the transcript of conversation and from that you can create “FAQs” or “Frequently Asked Questions”.

4.1.3 How to 'Auto Publish' Students' Reflective Learning Journal in a Blog

Reflective learning journal is a student writing task where the student has to record his or her reflections on lecture topics learned. To share the journal with other students, it is recommended to use ‘auto-publish’ function. To do these, you need to create an e-mail posting address. This can be possibly done in Blogspot and Wordpress. In Blogspot, you can choose your e-mail whereas in Wordpress, the special e-mail is generated for you. With the e-mail posting address, once a journal is send to the special e-mail posting address, the journal is automatically published in the blog. The below figure shows how the e-mail posting address is created in Blogspot.

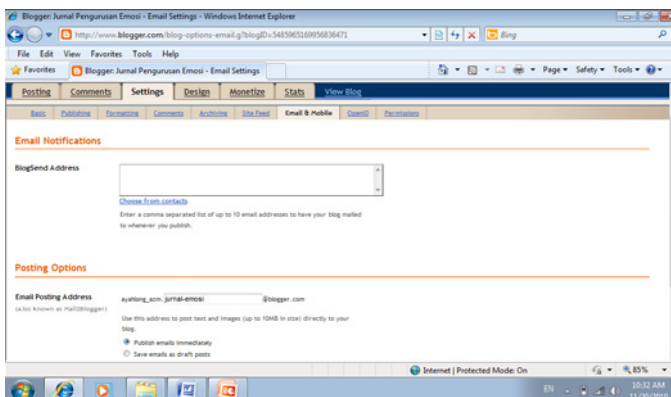


Figure 6. The blog setting

What a student needs to do is to send his or her journal entries to a special e-mail address once a week. In the 'subject' field, students need to type his or her student ID, name and the journal topic number. These information are needed in order to facilitate searching when the journal entries are to be evaluated. Another thing is, students are encouraged to attach images that enhances or related to his or her topic in the journal writing. After clicking the 'send' button, the e-mail is sent to the blog and the message is immediately published. This is shown by the following figure.



Figure 7. Snapshot of a sample journal in the blog

4.1.4 How to Collect Students Feedback Using Google Docs

To collect student feedback, the two recommended tools are Google Docs and SurveyMonkey. In Google Docs, the relevant tools are Google Form and Google Spreadsheet. Among steps involved in managing students' grades and attendance records are:

- Step 1 create online form
- Step 2 publishing the form
- Step 3 collecting responses

To create online form, you need to have a Gmail account. To create a Gmail account, just fill in the form available at <http://www.gmail.com>. You are ready to create a Google form when you have your username and password. To create a form, the first step you need to do is to sign in at <http://docs.google.com>. Enter your username or Gmail ID and your password, and then click the blue 'Sign in' button. You are then directed to the 'Home' of Google Docs. To create a form, click the brown 'Create' button, and the drop-down menus appears as shown in the following figure:

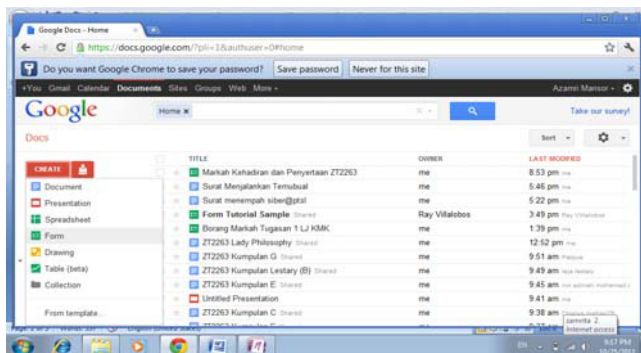


Figure 8. The Document List in Google Docs

From the drop down menu, select 'Form'. You are then directed to an untitled form. The next step is to fill in the required information. By default, the filename given is 'Untitled form' but this can be changed to a new filename. Underneath the 'Untitled form' there is a large text box where you can write some information that help people filling in the form.

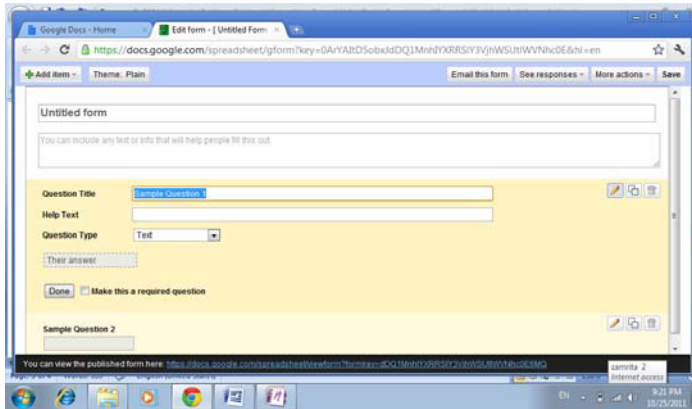


Figure 9. The untitled form

After filling in the form, save the document by clicking the 'Save' button. Another useful online survey tool is SurveyMonkey. The principle is the same with Google Form except SurveyMonkey offers a lot more question types in designing the form. Layout of SurveyMonkey is as in the following figure.

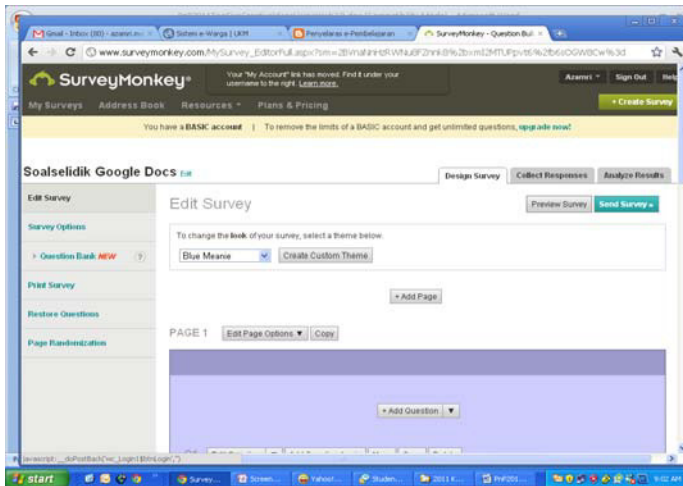


Figure 10. Designing an online survey with SurveyMonkey

4.1.5 How to Share Your Lecture Slide with Students

There are two recommended ways to share your slides with your students online through Google Presentations and Slideshare. For Google Presentations, you can either create new slide or upload your PowerPoint slides and convert the slides into Google Presentation. The best thing about Google Presentation is you can insert live YouTube videos in a very easy way without having to copy iframe scripts. To share the slides, there are two ways to do this, (1) email the url link to students, or (2) embed the link in blogpost, web site or SPIN. Students have many options what to do with the slide whether to play or to print the slides in pdf or ppt forms as shown in the following figure.

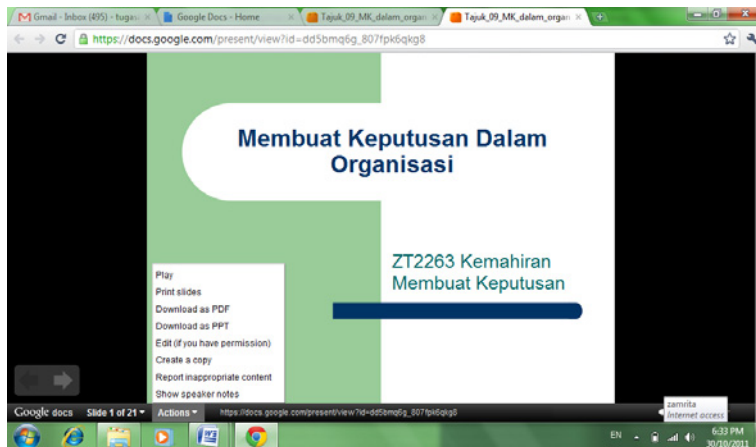


Figure 11. The Options of what to do with the slides

The slides can be easily embedded in a website or blog. To do this, you just need to copy and paste the iframe code to the website or blog. This is what is like when you embed the Google slides in a website.

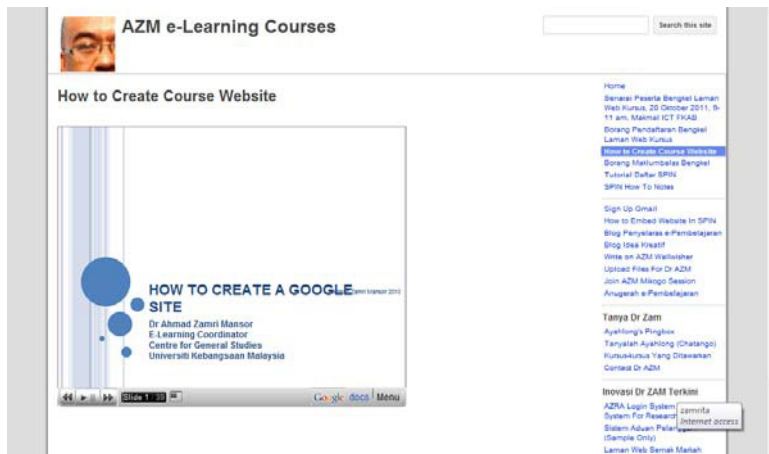


Figure 12. Google presentation embedded in a website

The advantage that Google Presentation has is you can have real-time presentation. The meaning of this is when students joins, you can control the presentation of slides. While presenting, students can ask questions using chat function available in the slides. Slideshare also has the similar functions. It is embeddable and downloadable, but account holder can choose to disable download function, ie viewers can only view the slides but they cannot download.



Figure 13. Sharing online slides in Slideshare

5. Conclusions

Web 2.0 is about allowing learners to collaborate and share information online (Thompson, 2008). The five creative ideas represent an effort to make this possible. The availability of the tools such as Google Docs, Slideshare, SurveyMonkey, Dropbox, Jotform and Pingbox on the Web represent an important feature of Web 2.0, i.e the direct accessibility through a Web browser rather than residing on the user desktop (Goldwin-Jones, 2008). The ideas experimented have pedagogical benefits, they encourage collaboration and sharing of information and enhance communication not only between lecturer and students but also among students as well. This also represents a good start towards harnessing student collective intelligence (Rogers et al, 2007).

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